

Walk Through The Bible

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11. NKJV)*

*25But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
(James 1:25. NKJV)*

His Hand Upon Us Both

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Job 9 and various

Rev. Paul Carter

Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to Job chapter 9. If you are new today and are just checking in with us on this series, we are looking at the story in the Bible of a man named Job. Job is a good man, a righteous man but he is a man experiencing some serious trouble. In a very short span of time he has lost his business, his prosperity, his health and his 10 children, all of whom were killed in a freak storm. Bad things are happening to this good man and he is wrestling with that and trying to think and pray his way through it. His friends come to bring him counsel and the things they say are ultimately judged by God as being heretical; the things they say are mostly true, but ultimately inadequate and terribly unhelpful in Job's case. We have spent a few weeks looking at the counsel of Job's friends; pulling out what is true and timeless and discarding that which falls short and is dangerous and now this week I want to look at Job's hope. The basic thrust of Job's friends is that Job is a sinner and that his suffering is God's judgement upon that sin and that he should just repent and God will restore him. And the tricky part for Job is, he mostly agrees with them but that doesn't seem to explain his terrible circumstances. Job is fine with admitting that he is a sinner and that God is Holy and that those two things have to be figured out or bad things can be expected. He is fine with that logic. He just doesn't understand

why it is then that his friends, who are also sinners are doing fine and feeling well and enjoying their prosperity and he, also a sinner is enduring tragedy, poverty, sickness and perpetual loss. What gives? Their view of the world, though mostly true is ultimately inadequate to explain what seems to be going on. It must be more complicated than that, there must be a missing piece in their understanding of the moral universe. Job begins to explore that and to express hope into that. These expressions of hope pop up all throughout his speeches but they emerge in remarkable purity and beauty in chapter 9. We'll look at that chapter as a whole – I'll truncate only a little bit for the sake of time and then we'll pick and highlight from parts of his other speeches as well. Let me read to you from chapter 9 and then we will draw out some of the Gospel hope that is found in this great Old Testament text.

¹Then Job answered and said:

²“Truly I know *it is* so, **But how can a man be righteous before God?**

³If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand.

⁴God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened *himself* against Him and prospered?

⁵He removes the mountains, and they do not know When He overturns them in His anger;

⁶He shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble....

¹²If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’

¹³**God will not withdraw His anger,** The allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him.

¹⁴“How then can I answer Him, And choose my words *to reason* with Him?

¹⁵For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge.

¹⁶If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice.

¹⁷For He crushes me with a tempest, And multiplies my wounds without cause.

¹⁸He will not allow me to catch my breath, But fills me with bitterness.

¹⁹If *it is a matter* of strength, indeed *He is* strong; And if of justice, who will appoint my day *in court?*

²⁰Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me; Though I *were* blameless, it would prove me perverse.

²¹**I am blameless, yet I do not know myself;** I despise my life.

²²It *is* all one *thing*; Therefore I say, ‘He destroys the blameless and the wicked.’

²³If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent.

²⁴The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not *He*, who else could it be? ...

³²**For He is not a man, as I am,** *that* I may answer Him, *and that* we should go to court together.

³³**Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both.**

³⁴Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not let dread of Him terrify me.

³⁵*Then* I would speak and not fear Him, but it is not so with me. (Job 9:1-35. NKJV)

This is the Word of the Lord; thanks be to God. Job begins his speech at the place every Gospel story has to begin if it is to be accounted as true and useful. He begins where the sinfulness of man meets the holiness of God. He admits freely that:

Even good people stand under the wrath of God

This is where all orthodox theology – all useful talk about God begins. You have to begin with this dilemma: God is Holy. He is perfect and powerful and majestic and OTHER. He is not just Holy Elsewhere, he is not just Holy Outthere, he is not just Holy In Himself he is Holy Over All Creation. He is as the author of the Hebrews said: A Consuming Fire. Do you remember that one?

²⁵See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, ... ²⁹For our God *is* a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:25-29. NKJV)

The author of the Hebrews says that the God who created the heavens and the earth by his Word expects that Word to be listened to, he expects his Word to be heeded and obeyed by every created thing and failure to do that is serious business because our God is a Consuming Fire. Hebrews says that you live by the Word of God or you die by the Fire of God. There is no plan b. So here is the problem: How can a man be righteous before God?

The word for righteous there is *tsaw-dak* and it means “justified” or “considered righteous”. Job is asking how a person can enjoy a right standing before God. He says: “I see the problem: God is Holy and people are sinners. I see that problem; but what is the solution?”

Job is in a really good place here because all salvation begins in this place. If you don't see this problem, you can never see salvation. Now remember that Job is a good man, relative to other people, he is the best of men. As we read the book we discover that not only did he worship God and pray for his family but he fed the poor, he clothed the naked, he cared for the widows as if they were his own mother, he took on the case of the weak and he offered hospitality to strangers. By every measure in the Bible Job was the best of men. If anyone on the planet might think that he could be righteous before God it would be Job. And yet he knows that he is lost. He knows that he is not just before God. He knows that it has nothing to do with how we stack up against other men **IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH HOW WE STACK UP AGAINST GOD** and that standard is beyond the reach of man, who is, as Bildad reminded us cheerfully, little more than a maggot. According to our instincts, Bildad said, we are beasts. We do not know right from wrong and we are too much driven by our lusts and passions. Job knows that we do not even know when we are sinning, so thoroughly broken is our moral compass. Look at what he says in verse 21:

“I am blameless, yet I do not know myself” (Job 9:21. NKJV)

Job says: “I look at my life and I do not see any glaring sins, but I am honest enough to know that I am so blinded by pride, so ignorant of God’s word and so fallen and depraved in my instincts and opinions that there is likely a TON OF SIN that I simply cannot see.” I do not know myself. King David knew about this too. He said:

Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*. (Psalm 19:12. NKJV)

David knew his own heart enough to know that he was simply too proud and too biased to correctly identify his errors and sins. He knew that he would always judge in his favour, he would always see things from his own best perspective and he would constantly miss how he was hurting others and dishonouring God. Like Job, he knew he was a sinner. Everyone around these two men thought that they were almost gods. Job had been the greatest man of the east, the elders shut their mouths when Job marched into town. David was the greatest king of his generation, he was a warrior a theologian, an artist and a worshipper. Surely these men, whom all others applauded, could count on God’s favour? When Calvin preached on Job 9 he said this:

“When men have applauded us, indeed, when they have absolved us, we shall not cease to be condemned and to remain confounded when we come before this great Judge.” (John Calvin, *Sermons From Job*. Translated by Dekker. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979, p.58.)

Job, David and Calvin all understood where the Gospel begins: on our knees before a Holy God, pleading for mercy, aware of our depravity and in need of grace. This is the Narrow Gate of salvation, this is the Eye of the Needle, and unless you pass through this place you will NEVER SEE THE KINDNESS OF GOD, YOU WILL NEVER EXPERIENCE HIS GRACE and you will only know his wrath for all eternity in the darkness and horror of eternal hell. That is what the Bible says; Old Testament and New and that is where every Gospel story must begin.

¹⁰As it is written: “**There is none righteous, no, not one:**

¹¹ *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.*

¹² *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12. NKJV)*

There is NO ONE RIGHTEOUS, NO NOT ONE. That is the first step in the Gospel journey. If you miss this step you cannot reach glory, you cannot see God, you cannot be forgiven. This is true in the Old Testament and this is true in the New Testament. My friends the Gospel doesn't change from Old Testament to New. What was hope then is possession now but the substance is the same. Listen to Isaiah give the Gospel:

this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word. (Isaiah 66:2. NRSV)

Do you know who is justified in the Old Testament? The same people that are justified in the New Testament. Those who are humble enough to admit that the holiness of God is incompatible with the sinfulness of man! Those who are contrite in spirit, which means those who **DESPISE THEIR SINS AND THEIR NATURAL WAYS!** Job says in 9:21:

“I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; **I despise my life.** (Job 9:21. NKJV)

Job says: “I am a sinner and I HATE THAT I AM A SINNER!” If you look upon your life and you say to yourself: “I am doing pretty well. I like what I see here and I think God will be honoured by my presence in his heaven” then you haven't begun to walk the path of eternal life. You don't yet understand that **ALL OF OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS FILTHY RAGS!** Nobody's righteousness stands up to the scrutiny of Almighty God. No one's moral quality holds a candle to his Infinite Holiness. Therefore **WE HAVE A PROBLEM!**

Now listen to me very carefully. I am so fearful that our generation is losing the Narrow Gate. We are losing the starting place of all Gospel salvation and if we miss this step the whole journey is forfeit. It is very common today to hear so called Christians question this starting place. Rob Bell made a huge splash with his book *Love Wins* last year. Bell was motivated to write the book because when his church did an art and culture show, someone displayed a tribute to Ghandi and someone else put a sticky note on the display that said: “Reality check: Ghandi is in hell”. This statement infuriated Bell and so he begins the promotional video for the book by staring into the camera and saying: “Really? Ghandi is in hell? And you know this for certain?” Then he writes the book basically to prove that to think that Ghandi is in hell is to suggest that people aren't good enough and that God would be wrong to send good people to hell. But church, the Bible says that **THERE ARE NO GOOD PEOPLE**, there is no one righteous, no not one. Let me be

very clear, I agree with Rob Bell that good people do not go to hell. But let me tell you Mr. Bell THERE ARE NO GOOD PEOPLE! The story of the universe is not the story of bad people and good people, it is the story of BAD PEOPLE AND JESUS! Listen to me students, when you go to university your first year philosophy study mates will ask you a super smart sounding zinger. They will say: “Are you telling me that a good God will really send a good person from Africa who has never heard the name of Jesus to hell for all eternity? Doesn’t that make him a bad God?” That sounds so airtight but there is one MASSIVE, COSMIC problem with that question and it is simply this: THERE ARE NO GOOD PEOPLE IN AFRICA AND THERE NEVER HAVE BEEN. Now let me be clear there are also NO GOOD PEOPLE IN NORTH AMERICA and there never have been. There are no good people. There are only people who know they are bad people and people who do not. There are people who think that other people are the standard of whether they are good or not and there are people who know that God is the standard and therefore they are lost.

If you do not believe this, then you cannot believe that which Job believed and pinned his hope upon. Job saw the holiness of God and the sinfulness of his own heart and knew that:

We need someone to stand in the gap; we need a Mediator

The reach of Job’s faith and hope here is incredible! His friends trusted in their own righteousness and they believed that their present prosperity and health was proof that they were righteous in God’s eyes. Job knew that wasn’t true, he knew something more was needed, look at what he says:

Nor is there any mediator between us, *Who* may lay his hand on us both.

³⁴ Let Him take His rod away from me, And do not let dread of Him terrify me.

³⁵ *Then* I would speak and not fear Him, But it is not so with me. (Job 9:33-35. NKJV)

Job knows that the problem is that the Holiness of God and the sinfulness of man set us as enemies. God, if he is Holy, must punish us for our sins, but who could stand before God’s anger? He would consume us all. Yet Job sees in the character of God a desire to be merciful, an inclination towards kindness and love and a desire for fellowship with his creation. He has not experienced God’s solution but he trusts and believes that there will have to be a mediator for

these characteristics of God to be held in proper tension. Listen to Job anticipate the incarnation in verse 32:

“For *He is* not a man, as I *am*, *that* I may answer Him, *and that* we should go to court together. (Job 9:32. NKJV)

That’s incredible! 1500 years before the birth of Jesus you have a person of faith saying: “Do you what we need? We need God to come in the flesh, as a man so that we can talk to God and deal with God over our sin.” That’s far reaching faith. Job understands that God needs a man to stand in the gap. No normal, human man will do because all men are sinners, even those – ESPECIALLY THOSE who think that they are not. No sinner can stand before God and plead for sinners! God has looked for that kind of man and he has not found him.

²⁹The people of the land have used oppressions, committed robbery, and mistreated the poor and needy; and they wrongfully oppress the stranger.

³⁰So **I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.**

³¹Therefore I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; and I have recompensed their deeds on their own heads,” says the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 22:29-31. NKJV)

Are you hearing this? God looked for a man to stand in the gap on behalf of the land that He should not destroy it. God looked for a man to do what Job longed for but just like Job anticipated NO SUCH MAN COULD BE FOUND. Why? Because there is NONE RIGHTEOUS, NO NOT ONE. Not one! Not Ghandi! Not Buddha! Not one! And so God is left with a dilemma. He wants to be in relationship with people but he is Holy and so when they sin he MUST PUNISH THEM and as sins heap up, as each generation becomes more wicked then the next the very SURVIVAL OF HUMANITY HANGS IN THE BALANCE! We need a Mediator! We need a God-man to stand in the gap and place his hand upon us both and make peace. Who will rescue us from these bodies of death? Thanks be to God for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Job looked forward and knew that we needed Jesus! The only way out of death and suffering and hurt and pain and futility was if someone came who was righteous before God and pled on our behalf. The only hope we have is for an Advocate to come and somehow satisfy the Holiness of God by making some fit payment so that God can turn away from his wrath without forfeiting his Holiness. That is our only hope! We need Jesus! Job looked forward to that in faith and we look back upon it in faith. The Apostle Paul says:

⁵For *there is* one God and **one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,**

⁶who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

⁷for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth [£]in Christ *and* not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (1 Timothy 2:5-7. NKJV)

Jesus is that Mediator. He is God in the Flesh. This is how the mercy and the holiness of God co-exist in the person of the Godhead. Job knew that there must be a way and he knew that a Mediator was needed but we can do more than know and hope we can trust and believe and BE SAVED! We can look to the cross and believe that on that cross the justice of God is satisfied for all who believe.

But you see that is the tricky part. To believe that, you have to know that God is Holy and that you are not. It is not enough simply to believe that Jesus was a historical character and that he died on the cross – even the demons know that and shudder. You must believe that you need it. You must believe that Ghandi needed it. You must believe that God’s holiness REQUIRES IT and you must believe that it is your only hope of seeing the face of God for all eternity. You must grab onto it as though your life depends on it, for indeed it does.

Jesus on the cross turns back the wrath of God and allows us to live in the sunshine of his favour. He is our propitiation. He makes God favourable to us without causing God to be dishonouring to himself. Listen to Paul declare the holy centre of the Gospel:

²¹But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
²²even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

²³**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

²⁴**being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**

²⁵whom God set forth *as* **a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness,** because in His forbearance **God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,**

²⁶to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, **that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith** in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26. NKJV)

All the hope of Job is realized in this passage. Do you see? Job asked: “How can sinners be justified in the sight of a holy God? We’ll need a mediator.” Elsewhere Job says we’ll need a Redeemer and he hopes to see him:

“For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;

²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this *I know,* That in my flesh I shall see God,

²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How my heart yearns within me!*
(Job 19:25-27. NKJV)

Isn't that incredible? Job says: "I know that my Redeemer lives! He is right now in the Presence of God in heaven and I know that he will at last, at some point stand upon the earth and be my mediator, be my payment, be my RIGHTEOUSNESS that I may see God in the flesh! How my heart yearns for this!" Oh the glory and the beauty of this man's far seeing faith! And how wonderful, how unspeakable is the glory of how this faith is realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Look at what Paul says; separated by 1500 years Job and Paul function like bookends on the Gospel. One looked forward to Jesus and the other looked back and together they sing the same GOSPEL SONG! Job says: "We're all sinners, whether we know it or not". Paul says: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Job says: "How can a holy God justify sinners?" Paul says: "God in Jesus Christ is both JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus". Job says: "All men as sinners deserve the wrath of God." Paul says: "God has set forth Jesus as the propitiation of our sins. His perfect sacrifice turns away the wrath of God and invites his love and favour". Job says: "I need a Redeemer if I am to be free from sin and see God's face", Paul says: "Behold the Redemption of Jesus Christ that justifies us freely by his grace!"

Oh my friends I so fear that we are losing this truth in our day! Rob Bell not only believes and teaches that Ghandi had no need of this but he says that the very notion that God has to save us from God makes no sense. Why should God have to save us from himself? But that is exactly what the Bible says; you read it in your readings on Tuesday:

¹⁸Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, **not imputing their trespasses to them**, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21. NKJV)

Do you see that phrase there, "not imputing their trespasses to them"; do you know what that means? It means that because of Jesus Christ God can still be holy and not count your sins against you. He counts them against Jesus and he killed him on the cross to pay for them. He crushed him to death the Bible says because of your sins. They are paid for. He made him who

knew no sin to be YOUR SIN that you might become the righteousness of God! This is the answer to Job's question: How can a man be righteous before God? It took 1500 years of faith for this question to be answered but right here, right there on Calvary's hill it was answered. That's how. You do have to be saved from God by God and thank God you can be by Jesus Christ. I believe I need it. I believe he did it. I'm holding on to that and nothing else. And now:

Now we may speak and not fear him

Job, knowing that this was yet future in his case ends his declaration of hope by saying that if he had such a Mediator and a Redeemer:

Then I would speak and not fear Him, but it is not so with me. (Job 9:35. NKJV)

It was not so with him, but by the grace of God it is so with me and it can be so with you. Do you understand that if you put your faith in Jesus Christ and his shed blood on the cross; IF YOU CLING TO HIM in faith, trusting in nothing else for your standing before God, you are covered over in a robe of his righteousness and you can enter NOW into the very Presence of Almighty God. The Book of Hebrews makes that promise:

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, having **boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,**

²⁰by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

²¹and *having* a High Priest over the house of God,

²²**let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:19-22. NKJV)

You can do right now what Job knew he could not do. Covered by the blood, standing by faith in the Mediator and Redeemer Jesus Christ, wearing His Robe of Righteousness, you can draw near with boldness NOW. My friends, not to put too fine a point on this, but when you do not come for prayer, when you cannot get out of bed in the morning, when you do not come for Body Prayer and Praise, it makes one wonder whether you believe this. You may draw near to Almighty God because of what Jesus Christ did on that cross. It was not so for Job, but it is so for all those who are in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God. Jody, will you come and lead us with boldness into the Presence of Almighty God?